

"THE BIGGER THE PETTICOAT THE SMALLER THE PURSE!"

=CARL HELFERRICH, GERMANY'S SECRETARY OF FINANCE •••••

How the Fate of Warring Nations May Hang on a Silk Skirt.

WILL the silk petticoats of women be the cause of France losing the great European war to Germany, or of Germany losing it to France?

"The value of the money of a country is in inverse ratio to the value of the silk petticoats of its women," said Carl Helferrich, German secretary of finance, in Vienna recently, when he was scolding the women of the Teutonic nations for their extravagances in buying French silks.

The Queen of Rumania, Carmen Sylva, shortly before she died issued a similar warning to the extravagant women of her country.

"The luxury of the women makes the men dishonest, the women immoral, and enervates the country in time of war," was one of the last public utterances she made before her death. She saw her country tottering on the brink of war, ready to join the allies or the central empires, as the exigencies required, and with her keen foresight she saw that on whatever side Rumania fought the women of her country would first have to practice economy if victory was to be thought of at all.

And, but a few days ago, Marcelle Tinayre, noted Frenchwoman writer, raised her voice and her pen against the women of her country who are extravagantly spending much needed money on the frimps and fussings of costly costumes from the most fashionable shops.

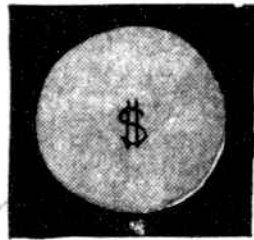
"The gowns that some of you are wearing are not even of French style," she cried. "They are phantasms, monstrosities from the brains of the tailors and the modistes. They have nothing to do with France or with French style."

"The extravagant costumes we see nowadays are not made for you Frenchwomen in the first place. You have too much taste to be interested in things of this sort. They are made to sell to the

The woman who dares wear a silk petticoat nowadays, either has to say she bought it before the war started, or that it is an heirloom in her family.

The Germans were the first to discover the peril of the silk petticoat and the other expensive trappings of fashion. When the leading economic and financial lights of the German and Austrian empires met in Vienna to discuss the war economics of the two countries, Finance Minister Helferrich immediately went after the silk skirt wearers.

He laid down his first fact to the effect that the value of the money of a country is in inverse ratio to the value of the silk petticoats of its women.



women of the east the good old Puritan element of "decency" enters into the fight.

Paris modistes have already decreed that the smart walking costume for spring should be fifteen inches from the ground and the décolletage of the sleeveless dance frock reach within two inches of the waistline in back. And the reformers of the eastern American states are not going to permit it—if they can help it.

The indignant state legislators of Virginia, spurred on to the defense of decency in America by Delegate William Myers, brought forth a bill prohibiting women to appear in public in skirts that did not reach to within three inches of the ground, or in a bodice that exposed more than three inches of chest or back.

The club women of Orange, N. J., under the leadership of Mrs. Edison, have



HONNORIST

"The rich women of Berlin, Vienna and Budapest who import these silks and the monstrosities of the Paris tailors which they call stylish gowns, think that they are dressing as the real Parisian woman dressed. But they are not.

"No Frenchwoman of refinement would appear upon the Parisian boulevards in the fearful Parisian creations that our women wear. The real French lady is a woman of exquisite taste, who has only contempt for 'dernier cris' in costumes. The only Frenchwomen who wear the Parisian extravagances that our women affect are the professional models, the grisettes and the women of the demimonde."

In this way did the astute German finance minister lift the veil on the mysteries of war financing. When French silk is sold outside of France, he pointed out to the German women, it makes the value of the French "franc" so much the greater. When French silks are brought into Germany, he continued, it makes the value of the German "mark" so much the less, because a country's currency thrives on exports and not on imports.

In other words, says Helferrich, do

started their own little revolt against the Paris decree. Four inches off the ground is the extreme limit of decency for the short skirt, they say, and in the evening short sleeves and five inches of décolletage may be worn with propriety.

"The main objection to the short skirt is its lack of dignity," says Mrs. Edison in explaining the reasons for her campaign. Grown women are going about in the present styles looking like little girls. No dress should be more than four inches from the ground, though three inches, of course, would be better.

"The great trouble with American women is that they show no originality in dress. They all look alike. They take a model and follow it blindly whether it is becoming to them or not. The announcement that skirts must be fifteen inches off the ground this spring is simply disgusting. It is to restore originality in dress within the limits of respectability that the Women's Club of Orange has taken the matter up. We intend to maintain a high tone of quiet respectability."

The low-cut blouse and the short skirt has aroused to an even greater extent the ire of Delegate William Myers, of Virginia.

"The dress of the average woman has more to do with the downfall of young men than any other thing," he asserts. "Complete nudity would be far more decent than the short-skirted silhouettes one sees in the summer time when the women walk up and down the streets of the city."

"I think a law should be passed that prohibits transparent garments, and also that stipulates that no female shall appear in public with a skirt that does not reach within four inches of the ground, or with a waist or bodice that exposes more than three inches of the chest or back."

But it was ever thus and so. Fashion from the first day of the world has been setting up dictates, and reformers have been trying to bowl them over in the name of decency.

In 1713 England and France both were on the point of revolution over fashions. The lack of material in feminine costumes brought it about.

"What are women coming to," demanded one bewigged judge, "since they are letting down the necks of their bodices and tucking up their petticoats which grow shorter every day?"

"The leg discovers itself in proportion to the neck and already more than six inches is displayed in these new gowns. It is neither safe to look upon the head nor the feet of a charmer—where shall we then direct the eye?"

women of the Balkan states and the South American countries who like flashy colors and revel in bizarre designs. Be economical, and if you want your country to win the war, let extravagant fashions alone."

In this manner right and left the women of Europe have had their silk petticoats flaunted before their eyes.

"The larger and more expensive the petticoats of the women," he continued, "the less the value of the coin of a country. The simpler the skirt, the greater the value of the legal tender of a country."

"The vanity of you thoughtless German women may lose the war for the German nation. The women

of wealth of this country who are bent on importing large quantities of silks and numerous Parisian gowns into this country by way of Switzerland, not only are setting bad examples to women of lesser means, but are deranging the financial balance of the nation.

"When we brought the economists of

Germany together to discover what should be done to make Germany capable of fighting a long war, the first thing they discovered was that German women were spending great sums on French silks. And the first recommendation they made was that such extravagance had to be stopped if the credit of the nation was to remain firm.

without French silk petticoats, you German women, and help your men win the war.

American women are going at much the same problem of silks and extravagant modes in a somewhat different fashion. In the campaign inaugurated against these extravagances by Mrs. Thomas A. Edison and other prominent